

Number 4

# COMET CAPERS

April 1979

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\* SD 3 UPDATE \*  
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The Futurian Alliance, now composed of us, NORML, Bay-Nar, the Network, Space Age Review, and Starseed Enterprise, proceeds rapidly with Space Day 3. The program for three events is solid with many speakers (Wilson, Nelson, Mikuriya, Frost, plus others) while negotiations continue with Timothy Leary. Films on various space projects, space model competition, futurian traders, model rocket shows, petitions, filmsingers, and the 3rd Supper Against the Neutron Bomb are only half of the vast delights the Futurian Alliance prepares for July 20-21, 1979 on S.F. Bay.

## MORE ON SCHMITT

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The March issue of CC outlined the prospects for a Jack Schmitt Candidacy for President of the U.S. next year. This issue I would like to explore the subject more fully but first take up the principled issue of who decides on such matters. The Board of Governors is unabashedly excited about Harrison Schmitt and is eager to sound the spacer masses on the potential of this futurian for some quick, dramatic action on the vital questions raised by ecologs, spacers, solarians, and liberators (human rightists). The leading members of the Board are conducting their own survey of the support for Schmitt. However, U.F.O.E.S.P. has not taken an official position on the matter and is simply moving on all legitimate fronts until an official decision is reached. The material on Schmitt in CC is one side of the story but it is also meant as a stimulus for discussion against, as well as for, the proposition. Every member of the Board of Governors is being given many opportunities to voice their views on Schmitt and we together encourage every active member to get into the fray. This is an important decision in the making; the more involved, the stronger is the likely outcome, whatever it may be.

The three biggest political advantages of Schmitt are the fact that he is not up for re-election until 1982, his age, and his being a Republican. The next three most important considerations are his potential name-recognition as former astronaut, disassociation with the old-guard/Watergate Republican past, and his membership in the U.S. Senate. These aspects do not outweigh ideology so much as buttress in a practical way the political views necessary for futurian support. No matter how wonderful someone's views on the future might be, without election to or holding of some significant position of power, the ideas go to waste. So, is Schmitt electable? If we conclude yes, then is the time to ask seriously, do we want to elect him?

Back to those first six important electable points. We must bear in mind that each consideration has two aspects: one, electability with respect to possible Democratic candidates and two, electability with respect to Republican contenders for the Presidential nomination. Being a Republican, Schmitt has an advantage insofar as the election generally goes because he does not have to challenge an incumbent for the job and the current holder is a Democrat. All the Republicans have this asset in common but Jerry Brown, the other major futurian figure, does not. Moreover, Jerry Brown must compete with Ted Kennedy to get the Democratic nomination, not to mention Mondale, McGovern, McCarthy, et. al., if Carter stumbles. It goes without saying that Kennedy is by far the choice over Brown for Democrats.

The importance of his next re-election date for Senator, his current office, in 1982 lies in the attention he can devote to the presidential campaign and not threaten thereby his chances for senatorial re-election. Indeed, his efforts to attain the Presidency, however long they last or intense their unfolding, would boost his stature and pulling power if he chose to run for senatorial re-election. Again, this is a characteristic of many of the contenders, some of whom do not hold political office (Reagan, Bush, the perennial Stassen, Ford most prominently). Schmitt would not be running for notoriety but because he was drafted (his 30-year plan, not the Presidency, preoccupies him surely at the moment). Thus, his qualifications for the job (experience, goals, courage, voting charisma, etc.) would be the main issue. There is no question that bringing his talents to light and emphasizing them nationally will only enhance his political career. This is not only important for him; IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US (LATER).

Let me take a moment to pause, catch my breath and wits, and bring a little ease to the reader. This project is a Much More Complicated Game than we have been playing or even thinking of playing, as ufoespers, futurians, or spacers. There is much confusion because there is much new detail to master at once, learn on the run, guess at. The outlines are sharp and clear, a tremendous amount of the sustaining structure and thrilling content is apparent. But the various connections, interweavings, overlappings, parallel developments are quite intricate and seemingly infinite so this breezy overview I am giving not only makes the reader's head swim now and again but mine also. Next issue of CC more attention will be given to why Schmitt is the best person for the job ideologically or philosophically. Much of the arbitrariness and blind enthusiasm here will be supported solidly and fleshed out with these coming considerations. Keep the faith, baby!

The last of the first triad of reasons for thinking Schmitt's chances of election are good is one of the subtly most potent and leads directly to the second triad of considerations. As a man in his vigorous mid-40s, Jack Schmitt is fresh to politics while most of the other contenders are old faces (Stassen, Kennedy, Reagan, Ford, and Connolly most prominently), if not in presidential politics, then on the national scene (most significantly, the Senate). The nation is crying LITERALLY for leadership; whether one reads the journals or news of the left, right, center or another plane, the plea again and again is LEADERSHIP, VISION, DYNAMIC PLANS TO COPE WITH THE FUTURE. Don't take my word for it, please; spend a couple hours at the nearest magazine or news kiosk. Jack Schmitt is young, healthy, a person with a 30-year plan in the Senate who has a lot of future to live as well as look forward to. People in their late 50s and 60s can afford to try the old, discredited schmes one more time, if only for glory's sake. Schmitt, child of the Nuclear Age, knows we can't afford another roll of the Iron Dice.

As a young politician, he is unassociated with the scandals and old, suspect ties of both parties, particularly his own where all his major opposition (Baker, Ford, Connolly, Reagan) are tied to Watergate if only through dogged support of criminal Nixon. More importantly, he is unassociated with the fiascos in Indochina (whereas even Jimmy Carter and Ted Kennedy must bear some responsibility). The Republicans more than the people or Democrats are looking for fresh blood, new faces, LEADERSHIP. Much of Howard Baker's and George Bush's appeal lies in their supposed fresh approaches and unsullied faces. However much Jack Schmitt shares this quality with others in the race, his face is the brightest of the lot.

As a member of the U.S. Senate, Schmitt has the opportunity to address any question without it seeming out of his province of responsibility. With only 99 other competitors for attention in the Senate, he has ample opportunity to draw attention to himself, to get notice for his views. The audacity of his 30-year plan is some statement of that ability. With foreign policies of trade, arms control, energy prices and the like taking center stage this summer and fall, all Senators are going to be prime items for the news. Even if our candidate does not run for president, he will be receiving increasing attention. Once again, as always, a few of his contenders share this background. But, at the least, Schmitt's similar membership puts him on equal footing with them (Baker, Dole, and Kennedy being strong opponents, this is no small factor).

The tastiest electoral morsel is last. Probably the greatest single consideration, though wholly insufficient in itself, for a successful presidential candidate is name recognition. People simply will not vote, except in the most unusual cases, for a presidential candidate if he is unknown to them, if his name isn't at least half-familiar. This reason alone, unlike the others, could sink the best candidate with the best ideas, perfect age,

cleanest record, strongest power base, safest distance from re-election, or whatever. If people don't know your name, without thinking, they won't vote for you in any large numbers. Schmitt is at an initial disadvantage with nearly all his opponents; but he has the greatest potential for becoming a household word. Of all the contenders, he is the only one who has lived on the moon. Jack Schmitt, as last person and first scientist on Luna, has a built-in name recognition factor that doesn't need any development beyond saying the statement. That is, once people have heard who he is, they won't have any trouble remembering (unlike Dole, Bush, Crane, etc). The very thought of his space adventures brings to mind numerous qualities his astronaut career would have fostered or strengthened in him: leadership, performance under pressure, adaptation to new and stressful circumstances, courage, mastery of detail, and so on. We have a dynamite property in this futurian and whether he sees the wisdom of the proposition or not, we must exert every effort to exploit this opportunity for the futurian movement.

This is not the place to go through a point-by-point analysis of Schmitt's benefits over all his contenders. Nonetheless a quick review is in order. Among the Republicans, his first and most important opposition, the leading contenders are Reagan (former Governor of California), Dole (Senator from Kansas and Vice-Presidential mate for Ford in 1976), Baker (Senator from Tennessee), Connolly (former Governor of Texas and Nixon's Treasury Secretary for a couple years), and Ford (former President who pardoned Nixon). Schmitt's strongest points with respect to Reagan are his youth, his membership in the Senate, and his being an (original) Republican. With regards to Dole, Schmitt's strongest points are his potential name recognition, disassociation with the oldguard Republicans, and his age. Vis-à-vis Ford, his major assets are disassociation with Watergate and membership in the U.S. Senate. Being an original Republican, disassociation with Watergate, and age are Schmitt's strongest points with Connolly while potential name recognition, disassociation from oldguard Republican politics, and age are his strongest points with Baker. The reader must remember that we are only discussing the six major political points and have many other aspects to buttress Schmitt's position. Much of that will come out next issue.

The Democrats will run Carter (current President), Kennedy (Massachusetts Senator), or Brown (Governor of California). Brown is the least likely candidate because he must not only beat Carter's forces, but Kennedy's as well. Schmitt has age, potential name recognition, and membership in the U.S. Senate over Brown. He has age and potential name recognition over Carter while his strongest opposition, as with all the Republicans, lies in Kennedy. However, Schmitt has the advantage of disassociation with oldguard power politics and his potential name recognition at least equals Kennedy's. The Democrats generally are ripe for defeat but they have a powerful reserve in the faction for the Massachusetts Senator. Reagan, Dole, Baker, Crane, Bush, and the rest would be easy pickings for Teddy. Only Schmitt, as the man John Kennedy sent to the moon, has the charismatic, geographical, and heroic appeal to match J.F.K.'s brother's political punch.

To realize the futurian potential of the Schmitt candidacy is harder than to describe it. We must recognize that Jack's initial response to the idea, even if he has considered it in the past, will be, "No." His 30-year plan appears to require all his attention now and his very youth and newness to the Congress may emphasize any reluctance to seek higher office now. Our first task, then, is to steel ourselves for an initial period of struggle with the man himself. We can keep this contradiction mostly theoretical by building the basis for his national campaign in such a way that his commitment to seeking the presidency is nonessential during the formative period. Once we have lots of evidence for support for him we can openly struggle with him, if need be, to run for President. Just as there is a military draft in times of crisis, so there is a civil draft. Already Ted Kennedy is the subject of a national Draft-Kennedy movement. If it comes to that, we must not hesitate to draft Schmitt. The nation needs him, futurians need him, millions of peoples' lives hang in the balance of leadership such as Schmitt can provide. He would not be the only space revolutionary whose role in the struggle was not solely of his own choosing.

The basic idea for his election against the Democrat, once the Republican nomination was secure, would be to take the West, the Republican's natural stronghold, and pick up the needed extra electoral votes in key battles in the South and Midwest (Texas, Florida, let us say Illinois and Michigan). Schmitt's strength in the South comes from his space connections and the nearness of New Mexico to that important region. Here is his ace in the hole against Carter. How quickly we can mobilize forces for Schmitt is the key to success.



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\* PILOT ERROR \*  
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These days are gloomy in the main for spacers. While they understandably take heart from the current Soviet mission to Salyut 6 (surely another record in the making), the news in larger part is one of setbacks. The Space Shuttle suffers engine delays, outside panel weaknesses, and vibration-test failures. NASA keeps an upbeat front and maintains the first launch of the Shuttle still will occur on November 9 but inside reports stoutly insist that the craft won't fly until Summer of next year. To add insult to injury, the Soviet Union in the anti-satellite weapons talks has argued that the Shuttle should be outlawed under any proposed treaty as it is a maneuverable vehicle and could easily be diverted to offensive missions (keeping in mind the fact that already the pentagon has claim to one-third of Shuttle flights). Even more upsetting is the sorry end to which Skylab is coming, as it is a matter of interest and concern to the whole planet. While news of the Shuttle setbacks only slowly filter out to the inner circles of the Space Revolution, the death of Skylab already has been front page news many times.

As the old story goes, when NASA launched Skylab in 1973, the plan did not foresee re-entry until 1983, by which time the Shuttle would easily save it or plunge it into a controlled descent through use of the Interim Upper Stage (IUS). As the first Shuttle launch had a March 1979 target date, there seemed ample opportunity, even allowing for development of the IUS. However, uncalculated solar activity expanded the atmosphere in the mid-70s and the resulting drag on the space station caused degeneration in its orbit. Initially this new state of affairs did not bother NASA because the Shuttle still was scheduled to fly months ahead of the Skylab crash. Unfortunately, the Shuttle schedule fell grievously behind.

The hullabaloo over Skylab's death centers on the "scientists' failure to expect or calculate" the solar activity which "caused the decay" of Skylab's orbit. Spacers must seize this moment to tell the truth so that the onus for Skylab and, more generally, the recent flaws in our space program goes where it belongs. The scientists have not failed; there was plenty of time to save Skylab when the decay of its orbit was discovered. Skylab is crashing down on our heads because the President of the U.S., since 1973, has purposefully attacked and trimmed the manned capability of NASA. The President is the PILOT of the U.S. Space Program and his decisions are responsible for the danger we face now from our own works. Pilot error! Let us shout it from the rooftops. Pilot error! The Space Captain of this nation has chosen to abandon ship; it is not the fault of his underlings, his technicians!\*\*\*\*jgm

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